

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00
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PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 /102 W
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R 151622Z MON 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5590
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: XF, IS, AU
SUBJECT: CRITICISM MOUNTS AGAINST KREISKY AND PAHR
STATEMENTS ON PLO TERRORISM

REF: VIENNA 2453

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: CHANCELLOR KREISKY HAS DEFENDED BOTH
HIS OWN AND FOREIGN MINISTER PAHR'S STATEMENTS LINKING
PLO TERRORIST ACT WITH ISRAELI POLICY TOWARD PALESTINIAN
SELF-DETERMINATION AND HAS REJECTED AN OFFICIAL ISRAELI
PROTEST. SOCIALISTS AND NON-SOCIALISTS ALIKE HAVE
CRITICIZED THE STATEMENTS; LEADING SOCIALISTS HAVE SENT
REGRETS TO ISRAELI COLLEAGUES; AND AUSTRIAN JEWISH
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WORKERS ASSOCIATION HAS ASKED FOR PAHR'S DISMISSAL. THIS
MAY MAKE KREISKY AND PAHR SOMEWHAT MORE CIRCUMSPECT IN
FUTURE STATEMENTS, BUT IS NOT EXPECTED TO AFFECT THEIR
VIEWS OR AUSTRIAN POLICY, WHICH TILTS STRONGLY TOWARD
SUPPORT OF SOME FORM OF PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION
AND NEED FOR ISRAELIS TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING VIS-A-VIS

SADAT AND PALESTINIANS' INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING OFFICIAL ISRAELI PROTEST TO AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL OVER REMARKS OF CHANCELLOR KREISKY AND FOREIGN MINISTER PAHR REPORTED REFTEL, KREISKY TOLD NEWSMEN IN VIENNA ON MARCH 14 THAT ISRAEL'S PROTEST WAS "INCONCEIVABLE AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE" AND WOULD THEREFORE BE REJECTED. KREISKY SAID HE CONSIDERED PAHR'S STATEMENTS "ESSENTIALLY CORRECT," UNDERLINED THAT BOTH HE AND PAHR HAD CONDEMNED TERRORIST METHODS AND HAD PLEADED FOR A PEACEFUL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, AND SAID HE HAD ALWAYS OPPOSED TERRORISM AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT. BUT SINCE PALESTINIANS ARE DENIED RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, KREISKY CONTINUED, THEY AROUSE ATTENTION BY "MEANS WHICH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HIMSELF USED" BEFORE FOUNDING OF ISRAELI STATE. ALL TERRORISM MUST BE MEASURED BY THE SAME YARDSTICK, HE CONCLUDED.

3. MEANWHILE, PAHR ASSERTED ON HIS RETURN TO VIENNA THAT PRESS REPORTS HAD DISTORTED HIS REMARKS. HE SAID HE REGRETTED THAT INNOCENT CIVILIANS LOST THEIR LIVES AND REJECTED TERRORISM AS MEANS OF PROMOTING IMPLEMENTATION OF PALESTINIANS' RIGHTS. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD SAID "A CERTAIN CONNECTION" EXISTED BETWEEN REJECTION OF PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND TERRORISM, BUT HE DENIED HAVING DESCRIBED RECENT PLO RAID AS A CONSEQUENCE OF SUCH REJECTION.

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4. PROVINCIAL PRESS AND VIENNA PAPERS, EXCEPT FOR SOCIALIST "ARBEITER ZEITUNG" AND COMMUNIST "VOLKSTIMME," HAVE BEEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF KREISKY-PAHR COMMENTS AND VIENNA'S "KRONEN ZEITUNG"(INDEPENDENT), AUSTRIA'S MOST POPULAR TABLOID, CALLED FOR PAHR'S RESIGNATION. JEWISH WORKERS LEAGUE OF SOCIALIST PARTY ALSO HAVE CALLED FOR PAHR'S DISMISSAL. DIFFERING ATTITUDES AMONG PROMINENT SOCIALISTS WAS FURTHER EVIDENT IN MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCES FROM TRADE UNION FEDERATION PRESIDENT BENYA, WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENT, TO ISRAELI HISTADRUT LABOR ORGANIZATION AND MESSAGE BY VIENNA SOCIALIST LEADERS OTTO PROBST AND HEINZ NITTEL, AS CHAIRMEN OF AUSTRO-ISRAELI SOCIETY, IN WHICH THEY SAID "WE REGRET STATEMENTS PURPORTING TO DEPICT THE TERRORIST ACT AS A RESULT OF ISRAELI GOVERNMENT POLICY."

5. OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PARTY CHAIRMAN TAUS CALLED KREISKY'S DEFENSE OF PAHR "INCOMPREHENSIBLE," AND PAHR'S REMARKS "INTERFERING IN MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS. . . INJURIOUS TO THE INTERESTS OF A NEUTRAL NATION."

6. AUSTRIAN RADIO ON MARCH 15 ANNOUNCED ISRAELI
AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRIA HAD BEEN RECALLED FOR CONSULTATIONS.

7. MFA INFORMED US TODAY, IN RESPONSE OUR EARLIER QUERY
(PARA 6 REFTTEL) THAT TAPED TEXT OF PAHR'S KUWAIT PRESS
CONFERENCE NOW BEING TRANSCRIBED AND COPY WILL BE
AVAILABLE EARLY NEXT WEEK.

8. COMMENT: GIVEN HIS INTELLECTUAL STUBBORNNESS, KREISKY
IS UNLIKELY TO GIVE GROUND IN THIS CASE ANY MORE THAN IN
HIGHLY PUBLIC PHASE OF HIS IMBROGLIO WITH SIMON WIESENTHAL

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IN 1975. HE HAS, HOWEVER, CLEARLY OVERSTEPPED LIMITS OF
LOCAL TOLERANCE AND WILL PROBABLY PROCEED WITH MORE
CIRCUMSPECTION IN FUTURE TO PUSH ISRAEL TOWARD GREATER
ACCOMMODATION OF ARAB AND PALESTINIAN POSITIONS. AT SAME
TIME, IT NOT ANTICIPATED THAT HIS OWN VIEWS OR AUSTRIAN
POLICY WILL CHANGE ON SUPPORT FOR SOME MEANINGFUL ROLE
FOR PALESTINIANS IN DETERMINING THEIR OWN FUTURE. WOLF

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